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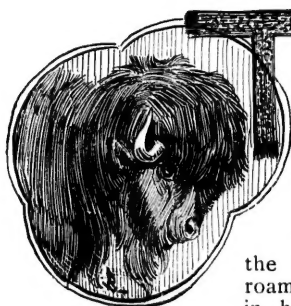
OUTING.

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THE TRAIL OF THE BISON.



IT is said that in 1870 the pioneers could not sleep in their "schooner" wagons on the Northern prairies on account of the tramping and bellowing of the bison which roamed the plains in herds of thousands. Years before, the prairies which now form the surface of a dozen of our States and Territories were the home of so many bison that there was not to be found a space of ten square feet unmarked by the tracks of these animals.

While *en route* from Montreal to Vancouver across the continent on the Canadian railway, I scarcely ever was able to look at the ground for a space of ten minutes as we sped along without seeing what is called bison trail. This trail is a narrow but deep rut in the turf, as though marking the route over which a mammoth bicycle or a millstone had been dragged across the country. There were tens of thousands of these, and wherever there was a pond or stream they converged toward it like the spokes of a vast wheel, centring at the water but spreading away from it as far as the eye could reach in every direction. In Assiniboia and Al-

berta, where the rich alluvial soil is almost black, these trails often bore a resemblance to crayon lines drawn on brown paper. In these provinces, where horse and cattle breeding are thriving industries, the peculiar fact is noticed that the beeves of the ranches and ranges always follow the old bison trails in their meanderings for food and water. The footpaths that their savage congeners made in the days of their supremacy are attractive to the domestic cattle, because they always lead to water and are hard, well-beaten paths, much easier to travel than the uneven and yielding prairie. In those ever-freshened, deeply-graven lines mankind reads a tale writ in the grass. The climax of the story was reached so long ago that the tale seems old, but we will see that time has been adding new chapters for the traveler to read.

As we journeyed on we found that the bison's remains had been made the basis of a thriving business. At the outset we saw a few bison bones dotting the grass in white specks here and there, and soon we met great trains, each of many box cars, laden with nothing but these weather-whitened relics. Presently we came to stations where, beside the tracks, mounds of these bones were heaped up and rude men were swelling the heaps with wagon loads garnered far from the railroad, for a great business has grown up in gathering these trophies. They are shipped East and sold at something like \$15 a ton to sugar

manufacturers for use in their refining processes. The trade will go on for years, we are told, and every year the prairie at greater distances from the railroad will be cleared of the bleached mementos of the erstwhile numerous bison. How strangely everything that recalls the bison also calls to mind the vast, incalculable number of them that there must have been! We certainly saw a million of

round them we could see women, lads and children, lazily watching the train. Some "coyooses," as they call the Indian ponies, were browsing close at hand. Then the train would run into a station, and we would see a dozen or perhaps a score of Indian braves and squaws in their gay blankets and paint-daubed faces, all hurrying up at a dog trot to board the cars when they should stop. The women



THE MONARCH OF THE WEST.

horns and jaw bones in the cars and the mounds, and yet for years the business of carting them away has gone on.

While we were yet on the western edge of Manitoba we began to be besieged by redskins selling bison horns in their polished state. Queer sights these, and soon to become mere memories like the recollections of the bison itself. The train would pass a number of dirty but picturesque tepees on the prairie. Loafing

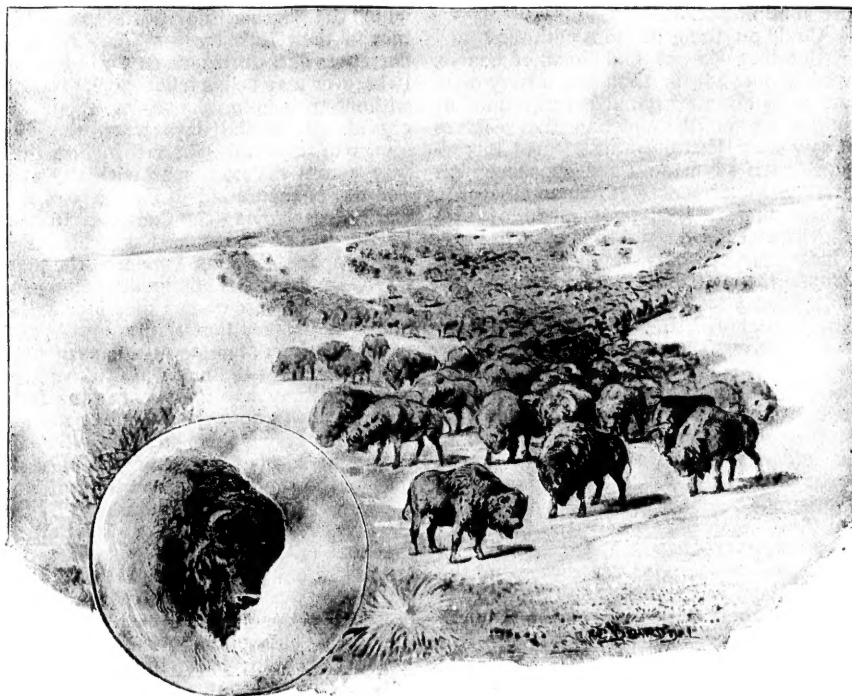
and boys would leap on the platforms, holding up pairs of lustrously-polished horns and shouting "A dollar!" "Look, one dollar!" Nearly everyone in the first-class cars made purchases, for the horns these Indians polish are always very shapely, large and neatly put together, while the tuft of shaggy hair at the juncture makes them look as if they had been wrenched from a living bison's skull, and such horns would cost at least \$5 a pair

in New York. In their preparation the noble red man illustrates his idea of how labor should be divided between the sexes, for while he compels his squaw to work on a pair of horns from five to seven weeks, at the expiration of that term he is self-sacrificing enough to take the dollar which they bring. The women use only the rudest implements, knives and bits of glass, to rid the horn of its incrustation of dirt and its outer surface of bleached bone, and when the black horn is reached they laboriously polish it with flannel, oil and the palms of their hands.

Nothing brings to the mind with greater emphasis the extent of degradation that the once noble savage has undergone than to see them peddling these horns on the railroads. The Indian and the bison were to one another what the codfish is to the Nova Scotia fisherman; aye, far more than that, for, though the fisherman relies entirely on the cod for support, the process is indirect, while the red man drew nearly everything he needed and owned directly from the bison. It furnished his

skin tent, his food and many of his implements. He got his strength and skill with weapons and with horses, his agility, his work, his sport, all in bison hunting. Never were twins bound closer together, never was nature more helpful to man than in this relationship; and now that the bison is gone the Indian is the most helpless creature on the Creator's foot stool. But before speaking of his now helpless state let it be noted that grave as was the matter to him he did almost as much as the white man toward the unnecessary and brutal extermination of the bison.

The extinction of the animal was the result of the increasing value of the fur. While the bison and the red man lived together in the manner provided by nature, the latter no more lessened the plenteousness of the animals than the wise management of our seal fisheries in Alaska decreases the supply in that field. But when the white pot hunters began their ravages, those who saw the tragedy during its progress say that the Indians became frenzied and, in Canada at least,



AN OLD-TIME HERD.

acted like demented huntsmen. Well armed and mounted, they rode into the herds of bison and slaughtered them from mere deviltry, killing them by the myriad in summer when the skins were worthless, and merely pulling out their tongues for luscious fireside tid-bits, while they left the carcasses to rot and feed the wolves. It was a high carnival of murder, unequalled, probably, in the annals of sport, savagery or folly.

At Calgary, in Alberta, the young metropolis of the Northwest Provinces, I was told that some of these same Indians who engaged in this reckless slaughter (Crees, Bloods, Piegiens and Blackfeet all were alike concerned in it) now take to their ponies in the springtime and ride away as of old, but in silence and sadness.

"Where are you bound?" some white man inquires of one at the head of the cavalcade.

"For the buffalo" is the reply.

"But there are no more."

"No, we know it."

"Then why are you going on such a foolish chase?"

"Oh, we always go at this time; maybe we shall find some."

Could anything be more pathetic?

But they do not find them, of course, and the result is that the misery they suffer is almost beyond description. At and near the different Canadian reserves I saw such destitution as seemed incredible, such as made them appear to me the most unfortunate of human creatures. I saw their tepees, once made of skin but now of muslin, the thin walls literally riddled by sparks and cinders that had leaped through them from the fires within. I went into tent after tent and saw the braves with their dismembered trousers covering three-quarters of each leg, with their thin shirts and the blankets which they never go without. The women, too, were well clad only for that hottest time of year. Yet what they wore in midsummer was all that they would wear at Christmas—all that they wore the Christmas before. In such muslin tepees on those bleak plains, with the thermometer anywhere between 10° above and 40° below, these poor wretches spend the winter days and nights. The wind howls through their cullender-like tents, the fires (often fed with wet wood) burn feebly, and around them squat the braves and squaws, obliged literally to keep turning around and around, now with

their faces to the fire and now with their backs to it, to keep from freezing to death. Whether they are to be condemned for failing to hoard wood and to provide themselves with food, who shall say? They do neither, but what white man can judge an Indian for his queer pride and shiftless ways? With a Government agency a mile away on the reserve, many will keep to their tepees for days rather than go and get their supplies, only asking for them when death from hunger is staring them in the face.

When their ally, the bison, was with them they lived a picturesque and comfortable savage life, with good shelter and food, for bounteous was the recompense for the only toil for which they were fitted. Now that the bison is gone, not only is their worldly condition such as I have pictured, but their moral life is a thousandfold worse. In no places between Manitoba and the Rocky Mountains is the number of white women at all justly proportioned to the number of white settlers, and in many districts almost the only women are the Indian squaws. Alas! the white man too nearly resembles that to which the Southern negroes always liken him in their folk lore—a fox. He is a corrupter and destroyer as an individual (whatever may be his influence in masses), without principle, shame, or even self regard. Since the days when the first gangs of railroad laborers inched their way across the continent with the rails and ties of the Canadian Pacific road, the work of destroying the Canadian Indians by the basest of means has waxed and grown apace. Father Lacombe, the most learned and famous missionary among the Indians, told me when I met him at his home in Calgary that at the present rate of destruction the western Indians of Canada must follow the bison in fifteen years.

Scarcely any man understands the Indians so well as does the Father; no other white man knows them so intimately. So long ago did his work among them begin that on the spot where stood his rude log hut now rise the imposing quarters of the *Pioneer-Press* in St. Paul, a city that at that time (1849) consisted of twenty-two log houses, and he has roamed all over British America with every tribe which it contains. He was with the red men when they held undisputed possession of the territory, sharing their life when petty wars were ever raging and being recognized as the common friend and good

counsellor of all the tribes. Now the Government calls upon him when it has need of an important envoy to the Indians, as was the case when he obtained the promise of those people not to take part in the half-breed rebellion headed by Riel. Scholars know Père A. Lacombe as the author of the "Dictionnaire et Grammaire de la Langue Crise" (the Cree language) and the reviser of Bishop Baragar's grammar of the Ojibway language. Better than this and all else, he is attached to the Indians in friendship and sympathy, and is a good, unselfish, kindly man.

"I went to old Crowfoot, among others," he said, "and I said to him and his head men: 'A railroad is coming through here. Many men will build it. They will stop at many points near your reservation. You must not see them. Stay on your reserve. Keep your women with you. On no account go and try to bargain with or visit these men. If you stay in your place all will be well, but if you mix with the white men you will die, you and your women and your children. Every misfortune will come upon you—shame, sickness and misery and horrible death.' I spoke pleadingly and earnestly, telling them I knew of what I spoke; that it was no new situation, but, alas! an old and common story. Soon the railroad came nearer, and I went again and warned them, and they promised to obey me."

The good and venerable priest paused and shook his head dejectedly.

"Well," he continued, "the railroad was pushed up to this point and the Indians proved, as they always have proved, to be mere children. One day I

came to my door here and found a number of the Indians standing outside. 'What are you doing here? Did I not tell you not to come?' They hung their heads. I insisted on knowing what they were doing here. They were silent a long while. Then one pointed to the tepees in the distance and said they had come to see the white man and get some money. 'Shame on you!' I cried. I told them they were less worthy than their dogs and horses and I drove them from my door. And so it has gone on from that day to this until, as I told you, at the present rate of decay the prairie Indian of Canada will be extinct in fifteen years."

Upstairs, in the rigidly plain little parsonage of the chapel, the good priest keeps a few Indian curiosities. He prizes highly the hunting arrows he has collected and saved, for they recall the era of the bison. He gave me two and told with sparkling eyes how he had more than once seen an Indian shoot one clear through a bison so that it fell upright in the prairie sod to quiver there when the horseman and the bison had passed by.

"Ah, those were the Indian's days," he



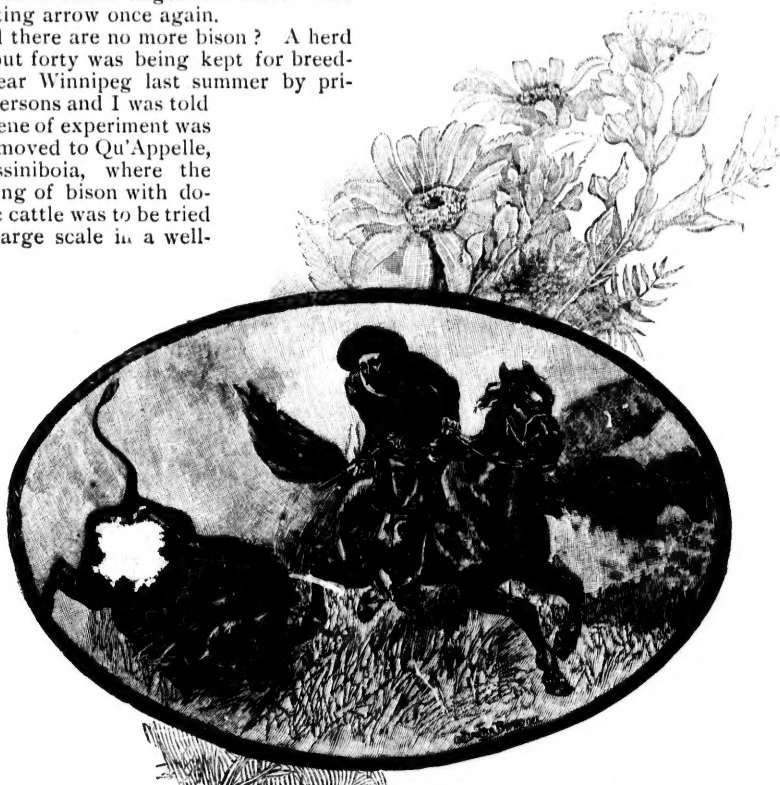
WHO GOES THERE?

Reproduced from OUTING, Vol. VIII., page 322.

said, "and these are the white man's." Half an hour later I was passing the tepees of a band of "Blood" Indians on the outskirts of Calgary. The men and women were away and only the children and some old hags were in the tents. The little redskins looked at my arrows with ignorant curiosity, but the old squaws laughed and rubbed their hands when they saw them. It was like a recollection of Paradise to fallen angels for them to see a hunting arrow once again.

And there are no more bison? A herd of about forty was being kept for breeding near Winnipeg last summer by private persons and I was told the scene of experiment was to be moved to Qu'Appelle, in Assiniboia, where the blending of bison with domestic cattle was to be tried on a large scale in a well-

met a hunter who positively declares that he saw the herd. It is wild and is composed of about twenty-five old bulls which were driven out of the herds years ago by the young ones, according to the custom of the bison. This hunter assured me that many a man has seen this herd and withheld his shot from a feeling of mercy, for all but the Indians and half breeds are filled with shame over the slaughter of



HIS LAST RUN.

guarded inclosure. There is said to be a larger herd on the Yellowstone in our own country, guarded by the cowboys far better than they generally guard cattle, so that no half breeds or sportsmen may hunt them. I know that the Winnipeg herd was in existence when I was there and have every reason to believe the tale of the Yellowstone herd is true. Sportsmen and some Canadian Government surveyors report that bison are still seen on the Red Deer River in Assiniboia, and I

the noble animal. Certainly this feeling should prevail, and, further yet, the Governments of the two countries that are united geographically by the bison's grazing ground should spare no pains to save whatever there are remaining for breeding purposes.

But that story of the mournful bands of diseased, starving and helpless savages starting out every year to hunt the departed bison over the grass that is specked with his whitening bones is the story of

the whole situation. The red man pursued the bison as his main support while both were uninterfered with by civilization. Now that the bison has gone, the red man must still follow him—even to the same goal. JULIAN RALPH. ✓

The enthusiastic sportsman who wishes to find the last of the American bison and undertakes to do it will learn before he has accomplished his purpose that the task will exhaust his leisure moments during many months. He (the bison) exists in limited numbers in many localities in the mountains from northern Montana to the South, even to the plains of Texas. Not in enormous herds as he was found years ago, but in scattered bunches and usually in the small parks where the white man and Indian have failed to follow him. One such herd of this almost extinct creature is known in Colorado, but it is as much as a man's life is worth to invade their home.

Within one hundred miles of Denver there are to-day numbers of these animals, and they have been there ever since the oldest settler near their home knew of their existence. There they will probably remain and possibly multiply without hindrance or interference from remorseless hunters for many years to come. Fortunately for them, they roam in a natural preserve, with the additional safeguards of a healthy public sentiment around them, backed by stringent State laws, and he who kills one should make haste to place strong barriers between his guilty self and an outraged public, which stands ready to convict on even shadowy circumstantial evidence. His chance for life after committing a homicide in broad daylight, in a public thoroughfare, would be greater than the possibility of escaping punishment after killing one of these animals and publicly boasting of it.

From the point where the Denver and South Park Railroad crosses the range at Kenosha and enters the northern boundary of South Park, to Pike's Peak, is probably between thirty and forty miles in a straight line. Along the western slope of the front range beneath this line is a broken region of which little is known. It offers little attraction except to those purely in search of adventure, and those who have attempted to explore it and returned alive tell terrible tales of their hardships and the difficulties encountered

before they escaped from its confines. About three years ago an adventurous hunter paid the locality a visit and brought out the evidence that he had shot a buffalo, but he also presented undoubted proof that he killed the animal to save himself from starvation while endeavoring to escape from what is locally known as Lost Park.

The most reliable information concerning them comes from the cattlemen whose stocks traverse the margin of Lost Park. These men would lynch any pot hunter who might be foolish enough to kill a bison, and thus the little herd have the double protection of a strong local sentiment aided by strict State laws. One of these men, while hunting cattle, came upon a bunch of about fifty or seventy-five of them. He could only estimate their number, as they moved rapidly away. He saw bulls and cows, but no calves, and he expressed the opinion that they are not breeding to any great extent. Last summer they were also seen by other stockmen about fifteen miles from Kenosha, who reported them to be in fine condition.

The region through which they roam is well watered, and as there is grass along the banks of all mountain streams they doubtless have grazing in abundance during the summer. Then they are fat, sleek and active. During the winter, unless the snowfall is heavy, there is probably enough dry grass to keep them alive, but those who have seen them in the spring always note their feeble condition and prominent bones.

At the session of the legislature in the winter of 1886-7 a law was passed protecting them for ten years and punishing anyone who violated it with fine and imprisonment, and with such restrictions as these "the game is not worth the powder." Added to this is the difficulty of getting into and out of Lost Park, the impossibility of getting guides into this *terra incognita*, where this little herd of bison roam at will with every opportunity to thrive and multiply that State law and popular prejudice in their favor can furnish.

Those who have seen them assert that they are smaller than the bison of the plains and their hides and hair are of a finer quality, but on this point conjecture and imagination may furnish the bulk of the testimony and be used in the absence of facts, as with the single exception